

MTCS 2000 Technical Meeting
May 19, 2000

Morning Session (9:30-12:00):

I. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Pat Arnaudo, Senior Program Manager in the Office of Public and Assisted Housing Delivery, opened the conference with a welcome statement and introductions. She emphasized in her remarks HUD's eagerness to work cooperatively with the software vendors and PHAs in developing MTCS 2000.

Johnson Abraham, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration and Budget, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Abraham explained that this conference would focus on technical topics related to MTCS 2000. He encouraged software vendors to express their concerns and comments throughout the conference, hoping to achieve an understanding and consensus buy-in to HUD's plans for MTCS 2000.

Mr. Abraham stated that it was very important to have the vendors at this conference as they are in a good position to help PHAs clean up their data. He asked participants to review the proposed changes made to the Form HUD-50058 and let HUD know if the form is not collecting a piece of data that it should be collecting.

Mr. Abraham also discussed the creation of the new Technology Enablement teams and explained how they would be going out to the PHAs to help them with their technology and to get feedback on the new systems. Mr. Abraham reviewed the XML technology. Furthermore, he explained how it has never been used in the Federal government—with the exception of the House and Senate—before now. Mr. Abraham stressed that if HUD does not use the best available technology, it cannot expect to have the best system.

Robert Dalzell, Office Of DAS For Community Relations & Involvement

Mr. Dalzell spoke on how MTCS is PIH's most important system. Through it, HUD manages over \$18 billion in assets. PIH relies increasingly on MTCS to explain and justify to Congress what the PIH does. PIH is moving toward also using MTCS to assist in monitoring activities, such as with the Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP), and to determine which PHAs need technical assistance.

Elizabeth Hanson, Director, Field Operations

Ms. Hanson emphasized how critical good information systems are. Field Offices manager over \$55 billion in contracts and they need quality information. She then spoke on the tremendous effort HUD is making in the field with the PIC Coaches to educate field offices and PHAs and find out what they need.

Robert Castle, Project Manager, PIC Team

Mr. Castle explained how PIC is an information portal to let PHAs communicate better with HUD. Over the next six months there will be a number of PIC releases. Through these releases there will be a lot more data available to users.

II. MTCS 2000 Project Management Overview

Carlos Otal, MTCS 2000 Project Manager, discussed the team's goal to move the MTCS system from a mainframe platform to a client-server platform and its commitment to meeting an aggressive development and implementation schedule. He stressed the importance of improving data quality and how PIH's efforts with MTCS are in line with the HUD-wide goal to improve the quality of data it captures.

Mr. Otal reviewed the recent accomplishments of the MTCS IT team:

- Functional Requirements Document: November 1999
- Target Architecture Analysis: January 2000
- Updated Form HUD-50058 for QHWRA: February 2000
- Initial Data Dictionary: March 2000
- Submitted Form HUD-50058 to Federal Register: March 2000
- Technical Reference Guide: April 2000
- High-Level Reports Requirements: May 2000
- Proof of Concept: May 2000

Mr. Otal then discussed the tentative MTCS 2000 development schedule:

- Form HUD-50058 approved by OMB: July 15, 2000
- Development of MTCS 2000: April 1 through July 31, 2000
- Vendor test period: Beginning July 1, 2000
- Implementation: August 1 through August 15, 2000

Q1	How will PHAs be affected by MTCS 2000?
A1	The changes with MTCS 2000 are on the back-end. From the PHA perspective, moving from a mainframe to a web-based does not affect them.
Q1	Will PHAs need to change any of their processes or systems with XML?
A1	No.
Q2	Why are you giving vendors such a short time to implement changes? It takes much longer than two weeks to write the code.
A2	HUD is providing vendors 99% of the changes today. With the proposed changes to the Form HUD-50058 and the Technical Reference Guide, vendors can start implementing the changes now.
Q3	Why limit the vendor test period to July?
A3	The vendor period is not limited to the month of July. The test period begins on July 1 and will be on-going.
Q4	Can PHAs submit previous versions of Form HUD-50058s after July 1?
A4	After July 15, PHAs must use the new form. It is necessary for HUD to only collect data on one form to improve data quality.

Q5	Isn't the implementation schedule for the revised Form HUD-50058 really June 1-December 30 since reporting rates are not reviewed next until December?
A5	While HUD wants to keep reporting rates up over the next six months, no sanctions will be imposed on PHAs if vendors are not ready in July. PHAs and vendors have until December before sanctions are imposed.
Q6	Can PHAs use as a reason for forbearance that their system was not ready for the revised form?
A6	Broadly speaking, computer problems can be used as an acceptable reason for forbearance.
Q7	Will HUD convert the existing records in the mainframe system to the new system?
A7	Yes. HUD will convert all of the data in the system as of June 30 into the new system and will then clean-up the data.

III. Revised Form HUD-50058 Briefing

Ms. Arnaudo asked conference participants to review the proposed changes to the Form HUD-50058 and submit any questions or comments to the Federal Register. She discussed the upcoming Public Housing Reform Act (PHRA) training this summer and HUD's goal to help make the transition to the new system as easy as possible.

Q8	Does the new form address the problem when a PHA enters an effective date in the future for an Annual Reexamination and then the resident moves out before that date?
A8	Yes. There is a new Void action code. Under this scenario, a PHA would void the Annual Reexamination transaction when the resident moved out and then submit an End of Participation transmission.
Q9	What happens if files are rejected because the project numbers are not loaded into HUD's database?
A9	This should not be a problem with MTCS 2000 now that PIC is a unified system combining all applicable information on a common platform.

IV. Technical Reference Guide for MTCS 2000

Joe Buechler, MTCS 2000 Development Manager, explained how the Technical Reference Guide (TRG) is a tool to help vendors do their job. HUD made changes to the TRG it hopes will be beneficial to vendors and will improve the quality of data PHAs submit. All of the new fields and Quality Housing and Work Responsibility (QHWRA)-related changes are incorporated into the TRG. Mr. Buechler reviewed some examples of the types of changes made in the TRG.

V. Technology Overview/Q&A

Mr. Abraham demonstrated PIC and MTCS 2000 for vendors.

Q10	When do we use the Void vs. Correction action codes?
A10	Void is used to delete an entire transaction. HUD will provide further guidance on when Correction action code should be used.
Q11	Do PHAs need to keep a hard copy of each record submitted?

A11	PHAs need to maintain an auditable record of their submissions.
Q12	How are the building numbers getting into PIC?
A12	A data collection tool will be made available in PIC in June with the release of PIC 2000.
Q13	Why would a PHA want to enter data in one of the new "PHA use only" fields if the data is not being transmitted?
A13	"PHA use only" fields will be transmitted to MTCS. PHAs may use this field for information that they want to relate to a household that is not captured on the 50058. MTCS will allow PHAs to retrieve this data through ad hoc reports.
Q14	Will HUD add census tract data?
A14	HUD currently has data down to the census tract and block group level for 80% of the data.
Q15	What about the 20% of the data without census tract data?
A15	HUD is working on improving this data.

Afternoon Session (1:10-4:00):

VI. Review of the PIH Goals

- Work with MTCS community - PHAs, vendors, industry groups, tenants
- Web enable all aspects of MTCS – web-based technology
- Define a set of business rules using DTD/Schema
- Deliver results quickly and in a cost effective manner
- Implement in a staged approach (can be discussed with PHAs)
- HUD is offering to help with the PHAs in the staged implementation approach and will provide support
- Provide tools to assist PHAs and vendors

Mr. Abraham reviewed the high-level system enhancements, and added that an upgraded version of FRS will be available, as well as an on-line data entry piece as a part of MTCS.

VII. MTCS Data Transfer Methods

Mr. Abraham reviewed the technical platform and provided information about the types of technology that HUD is embracing. In discussing XML, Mr. Abraham asked if anyone was unfamiliar with the format and purpose of XML, and because a few people said they were unfamiliar with XML, Mr. Abraham provided a brief overview of XML. The point Mr. Abraham stressed the most about XML was that XML provides content and structure but not format, versus HTML, which provides content and format but not structure. Mr. Abraham also stressed that HTML mixed format with content, whereas format is kept separate in XML. XML defines a platform-independent, vendor-neutral set of business data using DTDs and XML schemas. XML standards and information can be found on the W3C website at www.W3C.org.

In the new MTCS architecture, PHAs will send their data to HUD in either ASCII format or in XML. If the data is in ASCII format, HUD will convert it to XML. HUD will provide conversion routines to vendors and PHAs if they would like to convert their data before sending it to HUD, but HUD will not require that PHAs send their data in XML format. Once HUD receives the data, HUD will

edit and validate the data, make errors available on the web and through email, and store the clean data in an XML repository and the MTCS database.

VIII. MTCS 2000 Technology Demonstration

Mr. Abraham and Sumeet Bhatia demonstrated and explained the proposed MTCS data transmission process for transmitting, capturing, and reporting.

HUD will maintain temporary storage of all transmitted data, whether or not it gets applied to the MTCS database. This feature will ease in the correction of erroneous data. We are not changing the way HUD is doing business, except for the elimination of Sprintmail.

Mr. Abraham provided a demo of the reporting functionality in the new system. He demonstrated graphing and downloading capabilities that will be available.

HUD proposed to use XML for the back end functionality and to "serve up" HTML through the web server so that browsers which are not XML enabled will still have the ability to view the enhancements brought on through XML.

IX. Q&A / Closing

Q16	Could Mr. Abraham guarantee that XML would be around in the future?
A16	Mr. Abraham provided multiple examples of where XML is in use today (e.g. Automotive industry, Mathematical world, Insurance industry, etc.) and he does not believe that the technology will go away anytime soon.

Mr. Abraham proposed that another meeting be held with the next few weeks. This would be a hands-on, Technical Review meeting targeted to the PHA and vendor developers. Watch Quick Update! for more information.

Mr. Bhatia reviewed the Document Type Definition (DTD) and explained how it is structured. HUD will provide the API conversion utility and a validation utilities. Any MTCS related downloads or information will be available in DRAFT format on the MTCS 2000 web site beginning June 1, 2000.